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Krik? ('storyteller grabs the audience's attention') – Krak! ('their response' in the 'oral storytelling in the francophone Caribbean': 263). 'Tis a story of pain. Not once upon a time, but then *and* now. Of the pain emanating from 'the wound of slavery' (241–2, 244, 256), in which the Middle (of the) Passage — that most horrific of all Atlantic crossings enforced on uncountable African men, women and children under circumstances so gruesome as to traumatise enduringly those cursed to survive it, in slavery — has simultaneously separated (clans, families, friends; the living, the dead, the unborn) *and* connected (Gorée, Badagry, Luanda; Salvador, Havana, Charleston; Bristol, Nantes, Lisbon). No golden triangle, but a black Atlantic, a diaspora both African and multinational, being simultaneously 'inside and outside the West' – so Gilroy in his 1993 *Black Atlantic* (at 30). This *Black Atlantic* constitutes the quintessential conceptual frame 'for exploring African diaspora engagements with classical cultures', as the captains of the present journey – Moyer, Lecznar, Morse – detail when setting sail (1–26, at 3). Time's the best healer? Not here. The wound inflicted on the black body cannot close as the crossing's wake continues to rip it apart, re-enacting separation: violently disjointed from its African kin, the black body in the diasporic Americas (south, middle, north) became the site of the brutal attempt at forced disconnection from humanity through that seemingly invincible, never saturated multi-headed Hydra known by the name of racism — *White over Black* (Winthrop (1968) recounts for the Anglo-American heads) — relentlessly reinforced, from Sally Hemings to George Floyd. Its cradle (with the pseudonym 'civilisation') traces its own past back to those mighty Greeks and Romans, notorious — outside the glorious imagination — for raping, slaving and killing, in the name of empire (and its associates, democracy included). Empire is what the modern re-enactment is about, too — British, French, Spanish *et al.*, drawing on the classical phalanx in support (with the gore and splutter thrown overboard). Take Cato, Pompey or Nero (the high-sounding names) — used as vehicles to instil the master (!) language into the enslaved, with the new Nero coerced to buckle down upon the onomastic cue, like Trimalchio's 'Carpe', or someone's dog (Williamson, 57–78). This 'violent indoctrination' (67) deployed European high culture to infantilise and animalise, to incorporate the beaten minds and bodies into colonial society by way of dehumanising inferiorisation. Take Athens and Sparta (the shiny versions) — mobilised in the violation of Santo Domingo (Padilla Peralta, 79–116). The *Atenas del Nuevo Mundo*, the home of 'the first institution of university learning in the western hemisphere', embodying 'its claim as worthy heir to a classical European tradition' (93, 95), is pitched against its Haitian (African = black) neighbour, before the dictator's racial politics (Trujillo, 1930–61) 'would place ancient Laconia at the heart of an anti-black project' (103). The dictator was killed; the project is 'alive and well' (115).

The white-washing, perverse throughout, literal in the case of Trujillo's skin (Junot Díaz therefore stuffs him into the footnote-hold: 253), also climbed the highest classical mast — its figurative arts. Take Andromeda (the one out of Africa), that seeming prototype for ivory on the European canvas and in the round (Donkor, 163–93): unmasking the 'Masked Africana' (180) on Henry Fehr's 'ideal' 1893 *Rescue of Andromeda*, in the artist's studio, in oil and digitally (www.kimathidonkor.net), is no superficial act of Blackening, but one 'of resistance to centuries of white masking' (191–2): victimhood turned defiance. Take Cleopatra (the *Queen!* From Egypt!), that supposed paradigm of 'female captivity, enslavement, and loss of power' (157), cast by Edmonia Lewis in Rome in 1875 as 'proud, regal, and free — a woman in charge of her own fate' (151), reminiscent of her modern black creator, who — like other coloured female artists in the eternal city — took hold of 'spaces of exclusion to make space for belonging' (134), foregrounding the multiracial past and present of the West (Morse, 133–62). When Lewis' 5-feet-tall *Death of Cleopatra* (of Carrara marble) entered Memorial Hall at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876, having (un)crossed the Atlantic (like Lewis herself, repeatedly), its 'visual dominance'

caused it to be ‘cited in both black and white U.S. newspapers as the most impressive piece’ (153), literally (re)making history.

On paper, too, the artist’s struggle with the past and ‘its reception in a European tradition of Empire’ (38) creates new middle passages, ‘always at sea’ (30), always bound to connect, through varied forms of radical composition (by Derek Walcott and Marlene NourbeSe Philip: Greenwood, 29–56; Aimé Césaire: Lecznar, 197–222; Bernadine Evaristo: Walters, 223–39; Díaz: McConnell, 241–65): from creolised Latin cross-examining ‘the anguish that is English in colonial societies’ (Philip, cited at 39) to fictionalising Romano-British history, joining the Caribbean Sea to the English Channel, Martinique to Londinium — as did/does the Atlantic. The radicalised verse of Walcott and Philip articulates ‘the tale that cannot and yet must be told’ (31) — that of the Middle Passage; it ‘re-enacts the violence of the treatment of the slaves on board’ (40–1), always mediating, linguistically and historically, to express Caribbean experiences in (a) language(s) whose *imperium* is thus destabilised. The fantastic and the real, too, in drama, novel, novelette, of Césaire, Evaristo, Díaz, join forces to (re)tell ‘the interconnected histories of human beings across the Atlantic’ (225) — many of which, like Trinidadian-born Dr Henry Alexander Saturnin Hartley (Ronnick, 119–32), author of *Classical Translations* (1889 — the first by anyone of African descent in the western hemisphere), pioneered those very Black Atlantic classicisms long before that concept’s recent (re)invention.

This ‘Black Atlantic in action’ (250) — artists, intellectuals, academic navigators — create ‘alternative pasts and futures (to) suggest an imagined route away from the shadow of slavery and colonialism’ (244). Agreed that cargo, crew and itineraries can (and must) expand: taking on board more non-Anglophone freight (79); diverting from the western Atlantic routes and northern crossings (where is *Africa*? To be enlisted besides, not appropriated by, its American diaspora, which dominates the present *voyage*); team-shipping with non-Classicists who know their modern historical ropes (across the cultural and linguistic spectrum). And — Ahoy! — docking around the globe (also beyond the Black Aegean of Goff and Simpson’s (2007) *Crossroads of the Black Aegean*) is no abandoning ship, no jettisoning of particularity: ‘the consequences of centuries of inequity’ (276) have held coloured folk over the barrel just about everywhere. All hands are needed on deck, in the Atlantic, the Aegean and beyond.

Díaz dared to wonder if his time-and-place-melting *Life of Oscar Wao* ‘ain’t a zafa of sorts’ (248) — the counterspell to the *fukú*, the curse ‘from Africa, carried in the screams of the enslaved’ (247), embodied in his own moving ‘back and forth between New Jersey and Santo Domingo’, like Penelope’s shuttle (250), or Lewis (and her Queen), a version of Padilla Peralta’s ‘black Dominican classicism [...] to decolonize the imaginary’ (116). The curse only stops when the Middle (of that) Passage has (be)come (to) the end, when the Hydra is the past of our futures. The tension of engaging the Classics against the Classics to turn the corner is an undercurrent throughout. Can ‘Classics’ really be ‘for all’ (Rankine, 267–89)? A ‘universal intuition’ (120)? Or are the black crew on board the *Classicisms in the Black Atlantic*, as their non-coloured mates in the Black Atlantic, caught between the white supremacist devil (appearing at times in shades of black, not only on Hispaniola) and the deep classicising sea, doomed to shuttle back and forth, like Sisyphus rolled his stone? Zafa!

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